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Disability Commission Minutes 04/20/05

ARLINGTON COMMISSION ON DISABILITY
MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 20, 2005

Members Present: Tom Boudreau, Joe Giurleo, Barbara Jones, Kevin O'Brien,
 Barbara Cutler, Lin Baker

Members Absent: Susan James, Louis Krodel, Maureen St. Hilaire

Staff Present: Jack Jones

Guests Present: Helen Hendricksen, Boston Center for Independent Living
 Stephan Chaires, Project Manager Drummey Rosane Anderson
 John Richards, John G. Crowe Associates

Peirce Elementary School Ramp:

Barbara C. said that the following Commissioners Tom, Barbara J., Kevin, Lin and herself reviewed the ramp prior to attending the Commission Meeting. Barbara C. said that three students that use wheelchairs surveyed the ramp to determine the safety and accessibility of the ramp at the time of the survey. The students did not encounter any extra difficulty in navigating the ramp.

Stephan said that he did not know when the plans for the Peirce School were developed that circular ramps were not allowed without prior approval from the A.A.B. or he said he would have either applied for a variance or would have designed a straight ramp. Stephan said that he had made an honest mistake by missing this requirement in the regulations that circular ramps are not allowed, without prior A.A.B. approval. Further more a number of panels in the ramp exceeded the regulation for the slope requirement and that the contractor will fix the non-complying panels to comply with the slope requirements. Barbara C. asked if the appeal is not approved how will the situation be resolved, Stephan said that the ramp would be removed and replaced with a compliant ramp. John said that the slope of the existing ramp would be reduced to less than 5%, which would allow the curve to remain because it would no longer be considered a ramp. John said that the brick walls would remain but the grade would bring what would then be a walkway to the parking lot. Barbara C. said that in her opinion the Commission should leave the decision up to the A.A.B. Kevin made a motion for a vote on if the Commission should leave the decision of the ramp to the A.A.B. The Commission Members voted four yes and two no.

Kevin suggested that Stephan at a future Commission Meeting review the Dallin School design with the Disability Commission. Stephan agreed to attend the May Meeting to review the design plans that would pertain to access issues.

Brick Sidewalks:

Barbara C. expressed the opinion of the Commission regarding concerns about the use of bricks in the path of travel on sidewalks. Barbara C. said that she has sent a letter to the Selectmen and Redevelopment Board regarding this concern.

Helen Hendricksen said that the BCIL has been working to increase public awareness in the City of Boston about the difficulties the public encounters while traveling on brick sidewalks especially the mobility impaired. Helen said that most people don't realize how difficult navigating brick sidewalks are for disabled residents. Helen also said that in urban areas many residents use sidewalks as a source of primary travel. Joe said that crosswalks should be of different texture.

CDBG Funding:

Jack said that a draft of the 2006 CDBG budget allocates \$25,000 for curb ramp work. If approved this would add to \$22,000 that remains in the budget from CDBG year 2004 giving a total available budget of \$47,000 of funding available for new curb cut work. Barbara C. urged that FY 2005 funds be expended before July 1, 2005.

Other Business:

Helen said that BCIL is concerned about access issues at the MBTA especially on the Green Line. Helen said that if the Arlington Commission has concerns about the MBTA BCIL would appreciate hearing those concerns.

Legislative Update:

Barbara C. said that the budget for Mass. Health benefits for medication will be reduced for elderly eligible people using Medicare and that Mass. Health will require people to obtain private insurance for prescription drugs.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 P.M.